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the art magazine from Gallery Delta

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# Artnotes

With six months remaining before the next presidential election, Zimbabweans have been reminded of the intensity of their political environment by a number of recent events: new Cabinet appointments, an escalation of the antagonism between government and commercial farmers, and the passage through the US Senate of legislation which would tie economic assistance and debt relief to a range of domestic governance reforms.

The economic decline of the past year and a half is unlikely to be reversed in the near future, and its impact has been acutely felt by all but a relatively small number of people.

How are the arts affected by all of this?

At an institutional level within the public sector, the impact has been one of strategic realignment. The National Gallery of Zimbabwe has, over the past decade, taken small but important steps towards decentralisation by establishing centres in Bulawayo and Mutare. The new galleries have offered a range of exhibitions and activities to their respective communities, and have also created a 'national circuit' that can deliver domestic and international shows to a far wider audience than was possible in the past.

The Gallery remains seriously under-funded, however. Established by Act of Parliament, and falling under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Affairs, it has for a long time had to supplement state subventions with other sources of revenue. Some of this has come from on-site retail operations, some from grant assistance to particular projects and activities, and some from cultural partners who underwrite or supplement the costs of exhibitions.

None of this is unique to Zimbabwe, of course. National museums throughout the world have turned to merchandising and private sector support as governments tighten the fiscal reins, and the 'blockbuster' shows which have become such a characteristic of the world art scene are routinely festooned with corporate logos and the paraphernalia of commerce. Few would argue that the benefits – being able to see exhibitions that perhaps would otherwise never have been mounted – are seriously outweighed by any loss of cultural 'purity'.

Where Zimbabwe does differ from the trend, is in the extent to which the non-government support to its institutions tends to be external, rather than domestic.

Foreign embassies and cultural agencies promote events and exchanges; European twin cities host artists and exhibitions; development agencies provide money for

programmes of cultural education and outreach; holiday-makers and business visitors swell the gallery crowds and boost the sales of artworks.

Many of these relationships and revenue streams, whether existing or potential, are particularly sensitive to the state of the country's political economy. The decision not to hold the Harare International Festival of Arts next year (on the assumption that few artistes will be prepared to visit Zimbabwe soon after the elections) is one manifestation of this sensitivity. Another, is the decline – to a bare trickle – in the numbers of people walking through the doors of the country's art galleries.

Some partnership commitments (such as the one enjoyed by this magazine) are more determined and durable, but the creeping erosion on the consumption side of the cultural equation will have inevitable repercussions on the production side. Facing a fall in patronage and financial support, art galleries will reassess their exhibition schedules; with fewer opportunities to show their work, painters will be discouraged from taking up their brushes.

A countervailing domestic development, and a feature of the strategic realignment, is the little-heralded revitalisation and increased state funding of the National Arts Council. The roots of prestigious, city-centre galleries tend not to burrow very deeply into the nation's cultural and social soil; a national council on the other hand embodies a web of intersecting interests and, if it knows what it's reaching for, can have an unparalleled reach.

It would be unreasonable, though, to expect that the Council will be able – if indeed it were willing – to make up the yawning deficits appearing within other culture sector institutions. And given *Gallery* magazine's focus on the visual arts, we are bound to note that the Council places more stress on the performing arts and craft production than it does on, say, painting.

It is true, too, that the historical neglect of art in the national curriculum is unlikely to be reversed to any significant extent in the near future. The expressive freedom associated with artistic production, whether in painting or literature or drama, is not something that sits easily within an essentially conservative education system. And even if the mood were to change, the financial straitjacket that most schools and colleges are forced into, makes the prospect of training and deploying an effective number of art teachers bleak indeed.

If the priorities of the public education system prevent it from according the visual arts their due, who is to do it? The answer is as old as

the question, and is exemplified by the establishment of the BAT Workshop at the National Gallery, which was the nursery for many of the country's finest contemporary painters. That the workshop has lost both its commercial sponsorship and its leading instructors in recent years, is a reminder of the need for continuing vigilance and advocacy in the face of declining support for the arts.

No consideration of the current stable of Zimbabwe's young painters – whose leading talents have featured at Gallery Delta for nearly two decades – can ignore that other consequence of poverty and social pressure, namely the tragic epidemic of HIV/AIDS.

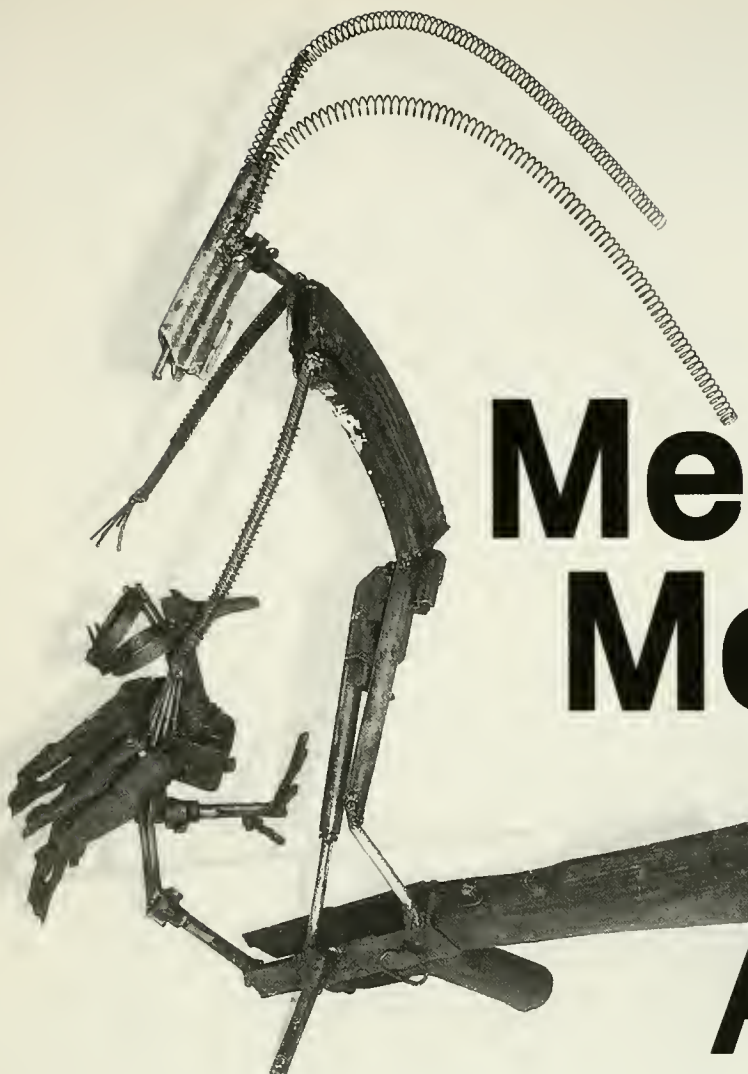
Rates of infection are especially high amongst the age cohort into which most of these artists fall, and there is no reason to believe (or to expect) that they are any more cautious or better informed than their contemporaries.

Any single such loss is of course irreplaceable. Within the world of art, its impact is magnified by the smallness of the creative pool from which the life is drawn, and the weakness of the streams flowing in to replenish it.

The desecration of the visual arts is by no means as critical – to most people – as the increased hunger, unemployment and homelessness that will inevitably ensue if the country's economic decline continues unchecked. However, without the chronicles of personal vision and social space that our artists deliver to us, we will be doubly impoverished.

The Editor





left: Gonçalo Mabunda  
*Catching the Peacebird* (2001)  
approx. 97 x 60 x 40cm  
found materials

below: Gonçalo Mabunda  
*Dialogue* (2001)  
approx. 76 x 50 x 40cm  
found materials

# Memento Mori: Art from Arms

The civil war in Mozambique claimed many lives, and damaged many more. It also left behind it a menacing inheritance of military hardware. Barbara Murray reports from London on an exhibition of sculpture which blossomed from a novel and creative effort to redeem that inheritance.

If it could, the little bird would squawk, as it ducks and dives, one defensive foot raised in alarm, eluding the stretching hands of its pursuer. Gonçalo Mabunda's sculpture, entitled *Catching the Peacebird* but constructed from fragments of dismantled weapons, reminds us of that old conundrum: man, so aggressively pursuing non-aggression, yet so clever at inventing evermore destructive armaments in a proclaimed search for peace.

After the bitter civil war in Mozambique, that caused more than a million deaths and countless disabled, that wasted 30 years of irreplaceable time, one innovative project is taking uniquely practical steps in the right direction. *Transforming Arms into Ploughshares* is the brainchild of Dom Dinis Sengulane, the Bishop of Lebombo. He explains: 'I think what we need to learn is that a gun is a very bad advisor. If you have got a gun you are going to use it. It's made specifically to kill human beings; it's made to kill your enemy. So, if you have no enemy you have to invent one.' Despite the ending of the war, it was estimated that there were over seven million weapons in



the country - hidden, stashed away, waiting to be used. Now, through the *Transforming Arms into Ploughshares* project, organised by the Christian Council of Mozambique with assistance from Christian Aid, people can hand in weapons of any kind, no questions asked, and get something useful in exchange. They can choose from a range of practical items such as hoes and fertiliser, sewing machines, a bicycle or cart, desks, books, school equipment, cement and building materials. The 'sword' is bartered for a 'plough' - something that destroys life swapped for something that supports life. Mozambicans have responded with enthusiasm, individually and collectively: one group of villagers collected over 500 weapons which they exchanged for a community tractor; an eager student swapped his gun for a dictionary; and two sisters handed in a sackful of bullets and took away two sewing machines which enabled them start their now successful tailoring business.

And the weapons? They are dismantled, broken up and delivered to the Nucleo de Arte in Maputo where, seen through new eyes, they become a huge reservoir of raw material, metal for re-imagining into sculpture. *Catching the Peacebird* is one of about 30 such sculptures on show at the Oxo Gallery on London's South Bank. There is both a solidity and a fragility, an entwining of horror and delight, in these works. The origin of the sculptures' base material is still clearly visible: gun barrels, pistol butts, mine casings, bits of grenades, AK47s and rocket launchers: battered, twisted, and used. It is not simply metal. It carries a burden of meanings, now roughly translated. This art, with its rawness, its hope and its humanistic idealism, is an unlikely sight in London's full-to-bursting hyper-art-market.

Many of the sculptures depict human beings, from an old man with a giant question-mark over his head in *Peacepipe*, to some scruffy, dusty *Children Playing War*. There is a dancer, a pianist, a guitarist, two DJs, several drummers and even an *Orchestra*. They are lightly, humorously characterised, each caught in a moment of enjoyable activity. The dancer's arms are flung up and out. The flute player's body, like the instrument he delicately fingers, lifts joyously upwards with the melody. In *Gaza Riverside*, a compact musician beats the row of drums held between his thighs, his arms are in full flow and his head whirls with the rhythm. The figures symbolise those human values that are the opposite of destructive violence. Gonçalo Mabunda says of one of his works:

*'The saxophone is the antithesis of the weapons used to construct it. It regroups people rather than separating them. It is an instrument of peace rather than an instrument of war.'*

below left: Gonçalo Mabunda  
*Peacepipe* (detail) (2001)  
approx. 69 x 38 x 40cm  
found materials

below right: Gonçalo Mabunda  
*Orchestra* (detail) (2001)  
approx. 97 x 25 x 30cm  
found materials

opposite page: Fiel dos Santos  
*Flute* (2001)  
approx. 100 x 50 x 50cm  
found materials







In *Courting Couple on a Garden Bench*, Mabunda delineates two fragile creatures. With a lightness of touch that belies their material, the hands are delicately expressive, and the woman's hair is created by two fine elongated springs that undulate gently. Love is desired, love exists, but it is extremely vulnerable. The lovers' heads are undisguised pistol butts and their romantic seat, the barrel of a gun. In another work by the same artist, benignly entitled *Dialogue*, the two figures are engaged in a disturbing exchange. Again the hands are expressive: one is raised to a forehead in a gesture of despair while the lower figure stretches out his hands in supplication. Perhaps, because of the terrible violence in Zimbabwe, I was reading despair into what may have been intended as much more innocent gestures, but even in *Orchestra*, I could not see the kneeling singer as anything but pleading desperately.

Perhaps, I need to take a leaf out of Humberto Delgado's book to learn the resilience that can accompany even the most horrendous of difficulties. Amongst his works on the exhibition was a striking chair, low to the ground, fashioned out of the gleaming yellow wood of cleaned-up rifle butts and the varnished grey-green of pistol muzzles. The artist says: 'We are fed up with the presence of all the weapons in our country. But we have found a way to use them in a practical way. Relax and take a seat!'

Two other chairs on the exhibition were by Mozambican artist, Kester. While not looking entirely comfortable they have an ageless presence – they seem to declare they would fit well in many societies: outside an American bar, on a veranda in South Africa, at an Israeli border

post or in a Serbian village. To me, these chairs seemed more like macho trophies, a reminder of entrenched attitudes. This artist's name inevitably reminded me of Zimbabwe's own found-materials master, Keston Beaton, but the likeness ends there. I wonder if Zimbabweans have yet realised how good Beaton's work is? *Bug* by Fiel dos Santos is a case in point. Though using similar subject matter and despite the emphasised 'crawliness' suggested by its twelve legs, Fiel's insect remains stiff and literal; it does not spark. Perhaps inevitably, the single source of material, with its dominating forms and references, is restricting.

Within the constraints, however, a multiplicity of images has been achieved by the Nucleo de Arte sculptors. One recurring subject is the bird, symbolic of peace and freedom in many diverse conventions. These Mozambican birds are icons of both freedom and fear. *Bird that wants to Survive* is long-legged. It could run. Its vulnerable throat, so easy to slash, holds a curving strength and its rifle-butt tail might pack a defensive 'thwack'. Half timid, half assertive, it is an ambiguous survivor. *Bird II, A Modelling Bird* and *An Escaped Bird* look upwards with enquiring beaks and dynamic feathered bodies, supported on sturdy legs and feet, yet they have a hesitant air, not quite sure which way to go; their instinct to action is in some fundamental way damaged. And they are the luckier ones.

*A Bird War Victim* is pitifully weighed down by a featherless weapon-body; its head, centre and source of meaning, is a blank circle; its twisted legs are distorted, disabled. Beaten, injured, it leans forward, painfully, on its thin beak.



left to right: Humberto Delgado  
*Chair* (2001)  
approx. 90 x 31 x 31cm  
found materials

Kester  
*Chair* (2001)  
approx. 91 x 51 x 51cm  
found materials

Kester  
*Chair* (2001)  
approx. 102 x 58 x 58cm  
found materials



Although the making, and the message, and the hope of these works is positive, they retain the agony of their origins. The message is old. We know it so well. Bishop Sengulane: 'We are saying that the armament industry, whatever the number of jobs it gives to people [and whatever obscene profits it provides or illusory power it promises], it's really destroying human lives and human dignity. And it is possible to convert that industry into industry of food production, of improving the quality of human life.'

The Swords into Ploughshares Exhibition may not 'fit' with the London art scene. The work may seem too crude and simple for the consumerist milieu of the West. But it is appropriately raw and direct. In the context of America's solipsistic war-mongering and the World Trade Organisation's immoral hegemony, this work has extreme relevance. Is anyone prepared to listen?

'These weapons have killed many people including my friends, family – uncles, brothers. Each piece honours a victim,' Gonçalo Mabunda.

Graça Machel, former First Lady of Mozambique and patron of the project, re-states what we all already know: the world needs 'to take away instruments of death from the hands of young people and to give them an opportunity to develop a productive life.'

The exhibition explicitly demonstrates the role that artists can play in their societies, and the Mozambican artists all speak of strong feelings associated with working for the *Transforming Arms into Ploughshares* project.

Fiel dos Santos  
*Bug* (2001)  
approx. 31 x 75 x 20cm  
found materials



Humberto Delgado finds that: 'Making something out of these materials is like opening a flower. I am transforming weapons into something with a positive significance.'

Hilario Nhatugueja hopes that the sculptures will help viewers to re-think their ideas and priorities and 'give people the chance to think about living in peace'.

And, for Adelino Mathe: 'This work gave me courage and strength to send out my own message as an artist, to share this feeling of closure – of putting the war behind us.'

For Zimbabwe too, it is time for change; time for the people to put the horror behind them, to pick up their 'ploughs' and to begin, again, to improve their lives. At the Oxo exhibition space, a videotape explaining the project to visitors and showing the artists at work played repeatedly. Part of its soundtrack was 'Nkosi Sikelele Africa'. Ishe Koinberera Africa! ♡

All photographs by Barbara Murray



# Thatha Bhasikili:

When the first bicycle was encountered by the Matabele people during the early colonial days, a new vocabulary became necessary and immediate – the word ‘bicycle’ was quickly adapted to local usage.

Dr Yvonne Vera, Director of the National Gallery in Bulawayo, discusses a recent celebration of two-wheeled transformation.



*Thatha Bhasikili* is an exhibition of adorned bicycles from Matabeleland, in particular from Bulawayo. ‘Thatha’ acknowledges the poised nature of this activity of decoration, the expression of identity in a modern cultural context. It signifies the notion of possession, of motion, of astonishment.

The adornment of bicycles is predominant among the township inhabitants of the region and has had a long and sustained history. The forms of adornment range from purely decorative elements to politically incisive statements and items; found objects and

scripted messages may appear on a single bicycle. Proverbs that comment on political events, on major news items, or on disease, compete alongside various knick-knacks like bottle openers, shoelaces, empty shoe polish containers, or a miniature crocodile perched above the headlight, its mouth tied with a red string.

One bicycle may exhibit items that cover a period of ten decades, showing how long the owner has been documenting his society, or has owned his bicycle. Heroes are praised, and famous criminals are caricatured; the state

of the economy is summarised in a small, button-down purse labelled ‘world bank’.

Wheels and spokes carry specific messages to do with deterioration of progress, mirrors and bells lead us to a state of self reflection. We are implicated in every matter surrounding us. Handle-bars; brake handles; bells; pedals; chains; mud guards; rims; frames, pumps and reflectors all are employed to convey specific detail, objects or commentary. Items are strategically placed, not randomly attached. We may pose, perplexed, as we regard each item on the



# Adorned Bicycles in Bulawayo

bicycle and try to place it within a familiar context. Items dangle; items are pasted down. Themes can be singular or mixed.

John Sibanda's bicycle carries a traditional theme and boasts a knobkerrie, decorations with ostrich feathers, horn-shaped snuff containers, and mirrors. Mirrors have long been incorporated into the paraphernalia of healers; the abundance of mirrors on this bicycle extends the traditional theme.

Pharoah Mpafa's bicycle entitled 'Cape to Cairo' exemplifies a mixture of motifs and is in fact a mobile gallery, carrying his opinions and his responses to a changing cultural milieu. It boasts children's toys focusing mostly on cartoon characters; proverbs such as 'the priest says time is salvation, the business man says time is money'; historical events from Hiroshima to Zimbabwe's Unity Agreement; top songs in the local charts are noted; a trailer is attached, with a radio; local and international football greats are recorded. Alongside that – do you know Pele's full name, do you know when the popular Highlanders football team was established?

This bicycle is an archive. It is so laden with messages and information one wonders how it moves at all, given that it is the means of daily transport for the owner. Added to it is a mimic man, perched on the seat whenever Mpafa has the bicycle parked, Mpafa's decorated jacket flung easily over the carrier. A red flower juts out from the carrier at the back. It is an amazing conglomeration of detail – colourful and chaotic yet stimulating and challenging to the viewer. It presents a shining example of this sort of 'thatha' energy and inspiration. Nothing on it is naïve; all is satiric, boisterous and engaged.

The National Gallery in Bulawayo wished to celebrate the long history of the bicycle in Matabeleland, to bring attention to the inventiveness and social realism of bicycle owners, to testify to the creativity and artistic input of township dwellers. The Gallery has a history of engaging the community as curators and active participants in its exhibitions. It is they who have the most immediate realisation of their emotions and their thoughts. Their work is done outside any conventional studio, and is constantly in motion, never passive, always conscious of the shaping of identity. *Thatha Bhasikili* was greeted with enthusiasm by the Bulawayo community. The gallery became, as it so often does, a familiar space of interaction and, most of all, a place of celebration. ↵



left: Gallery staff members Eukeria Sitanimezi and Voti Thebe with one of the exhibits

above: Imbongi praises the winning bicycle, Pharoah Mpafa's *Cape to Cairo*

below: The Dancing Queens at the exhibition opening





# *Juxtapose:*

an exhibition of paintings by John Kotze

Reviewed by Gillian Wright.

*Shubidua* (Johannesburg) 2000

90 x 80cm

oil on canvas





This work of John Kotze's: what words does it immediately claim from me?

The opposite of despair. Goodness. The energy and directness of children. The new brightness of damask dresses at a wedding.

But as I write – vaccinated by all the decades of life in Zimbabwe, creating, responding to art and people, seeing the exhibitions – I am affected by the consciousness of all the recently dead artists: Stephen Williams, Ishmael Wilfred, Henry Thompson, Fasoni Sibanda, Luis Meque, Hilary Kashiri. All of that generous struggle that should have been the groundwork of great work in middle life.

I overheard someone at the opening saying of John Kotze, 'He must enjoy it because he really does see what he's looking at.' These pictures of urban life in Zimbabwe, in South Africa and Mozambique, in Lisbon and Rome excited the surprise and pleasure of previous shows, but with more intensity throughout. They are complex, compelling, bright. The familiar roughness is still there, but Kotze's technique is more developed.

The exhibition celebrates travel, and argues for displays of merchandise, whether by roadside hawkers or big city stores, to be seen as aesthetically viable. It takes note of felicities of design in all kinds of things, from buildings to plastic-ware. *Juxtaposed* reflects the original designer or architect's intention and the artist's serendipity in seeing it in a particular light.

'One of the things that drive me,' Kotze says, 'is to make each painting memorable. Each one is an individual creation. You can go to a gallery and afterwards find it difficult to remember what you've seen. I want the pictures to stay in your mind.'

They do. On first viewing, one is often assailed by the physicality of their impact. The fresh, thick brightness, the wholehearted acceptance of what is seen, is almost embarrassing, created as it is in the midst of social and economic decay. Kotze seems to have a flinty, audacious refusal to yield to misery.

Writing in *Gallery No 7*, Adda Geiling remarked that, 'Only a very few artists are courageous enough to paint real and delicate issues ... Still missing is the self-confidence to cross boundaries and to see themselves as a mouthpiece of serious social expression.' I raised this

with the artist. 'Yes, it is about seeing. I do wonder, and I do think about it. If it's not from within you, it's contrived. Broadly speaking, there are always two traditions – Picasso and Matisse were their great exponents. Some go for the Picasso tradition and some, like me, are in the Matisse mode.'

Matisse or no, I would say that Kotze is indeed 'crossing boundaries', 'painting real and delicate issues', shifting between past and present, going beyond the 'safe' subjects for painting. He is answering our need for signs that give glad permission, as it were, to regard as beautiful, to be able to incorporate into our moral view, an idea of the Good as it appears in our day-to-day experience of modern Africa. The intensity of his interest in displays of fashion items from Rome to Raffingora demonstrates an open social and aesthetic awareness.

He says, 'I try to avoid showing Africa as a place with huts and bare-breasted people with buckets on their heads. Or bush. I try with a blend of things from all over Africa and Europe to show Africa in a modern light rather than how it is traditionally viewed. It is a modern developing continent. We have to get out of the old visions.'

The raw quality that he gives to his paint, the rawness that he refuses to polish, is his way of marking his pictures as new visions. The sophistication of his uses of multiple perspectives, of the rendering of illusions of differing depths in the same picture is ruptured by the brute personality of his painting technique. His allusions to the Dutch Masters, to the Impressionists, to Hockney, demand this treatment to save the work from becoming too glossy, too decadently perfect. It is what is post-modern about him: the vision of old cultures co-existing, on the point of collapsing, within a bright, harsh, more honest new context.

Kotze studied with Martin van der Spuy and Mike White after deciding to change career from engineering to art, although his interest in structure and perspective still marks him as an engineer. He has not had to jettison the dictates of the academicians, especially of those who expect their intellectual progeny to use the ideas and techniques of artists who have made their way into the canon of the great. Kotze has a clarity and an idiosyncrasy of vision all of his own, because of his absolute identity with the experience of seeing. But all of us – especially those with their eyes so voraciously

open – have influences, and mentors. Who are Kotze's favourite painters?

'Hopper, maybe? I look at galleries all the time. I just love anything I see, from Rembrandt to Lucien Freud. I'm interested in everything I can lay my eyes on.'

His paintings certainly offer echoes of Hopper's city scenes, and people in cafes, but the light is safer, warmer. He has learned from Old Masters' techniques to achieve the effect of light on fabric, and perhaps an attitude to realism from Lucien Freud. Over the last ten years, Kotze's work has shown a continuous development in the felicitous application of paint. His own qualified assessment – 'I am getting better, whatever that means' – contains, I think, a warning against assuming that there must necessarily be 'progress': his pictures do not allow themselves to be numbered artefacts observed as bits of evidence on Improvement's Way. Photographic records from exhibitions since 1990, of interiors, portraits or landscapes show examples of previous successes of the same standard as this work, but with different intentions and methods.

'It's important to travel – you see things differently, and you don't forget what you have seen.' Again the emphasis on remembering, on rescuing experience from oblivion and preserving it. Kotze's own awareness of this particular gift of seeing, by which the commonplace becomes remarkable, must fire the passion that keeps him painting and nurturing his vision. I would say that Kotze is a visionary, in that he turns outward, away from the fusty cupboard of self, and refuses to bow to the idols of dreariness and defeat.

We tend to look for spiritual verities in the arts, and relegate the objects of commerce to a lower plane. Kotze recognises that we function within economies, and that beauty and truth are to be found there. The delight in the way he sees things for sale at first masks the irony that in the midst of commercialism there is vision, illumination. His titles often pinpoint the irony, as do the teasing mirror images that cause an initial confusion which alters one's visual understanding. His use of light radiating from within shop windows and cafés makes the scenes look like unreal visions. A certain technical ingenuousness tricks one into thinking

**Black, White, Read All Over** (Enterprise Road, Harare), 2001  
70 x 80cm  
oil on canvas





right: *Dolphin, Big Bar, Unity* (Epworth), 2001  
50 x 80cm  
oil on canvas

below: *Victoria's Secret* (Mbare), 2001  
50 x 80cm  
oil on canvas



that there is a naivete in the way that he responds to things, but this is offset by his sophisticated handling of multiple perspectives.

It is worth attending to Kotze's choice of merchandise, to what engages him. Hats and shoes, for instance. He agrees – though not vehemently – that there is an element of Freudian fetishism in such accessories, revealing as they are of the personality. Shoes imply moving, going places, while hats shade, hide, protect and celebrate the head – the focus of the person's mind and individuality. They are also fashion items that require specialist designers and craft-persons. Mass-produced items can also acquire elegance from the hands of unknown artists who bring a fine decorative sense to the design of their displays.

In *Black, White, Read All Over*, with its black-and-white curio guinea fowl marching across a square of newspaper, we can see Kotze's fascination with accentuating the design to be found in the arrangements of informal markets. He grasps in such pictures a determination to re-create what has captivated him, using a variety of techniques to wring a seductive stillness out of a fluid medium.

The best examples of his investigations of informal visual marketing are, I think, *Dolphin, Big Ben and Unity*, and *Victoria's Secret*. In these, especially, the 'hints' that 'spark' are given an articulation that resonates through the technical success. *Dolphin* reminds me of Thakor Patel's work in its harmony, in the delicate balance of formal and decorative elements.



The functionality of the lettering subdues and confines the ornamentation so that it is integral to the hawked objects. Kotze's insistence on rendering them in such detail (while painting the shadows in a flat artificial brown) subverts the purity of mere function and elevates the decoration into a prominence which declares: 'Beauty for Sale!' rather than 'Laundry Soap for Sale!' The painting's limited palette and severe geometry are in keeping with the smallness, the earnestness, of the table that constitutes the 'shop'.

*Victoria's Secret* presents us with a line of women's underpants at a stall in Harare's Mbare Market. The garments are pegged out on a fence for everyone to see. The reaction is: 'Immodest! Outrageous!' Underwear is fine when it's hidden. Private things should be private. Like one's thoughts. But when you paint, you are crossing a line, exposing the hidden. I think the painting reflects this aspect of being an artist – the public revelling in the painting of those clothes, the bright treatment of light glittering on the wire diamonds of the fence itself, contrasted with the austere dark industrial background. What is alarming, is the gaiety of the innocent panties, in their delicious, frivolous, sensuous too-pinks and too-peaches, a gaiety intensified by the

offended, and the image of Queen Victoria hovers in our consciousness as we consider the picture and think at the same time about Mbare. The rigid, middle-class view of Mbare as 'second-hand' and 'grubby' wobbles and disintegrates under Victoria's cold eye, as the artist offers us a view of clean beauty. Grinning, Kotze pointed out to me the grid of little red hearts on the pants that drew his attention to them in the first place. This erotic symbol, machine-printed in a matter-of-fact repeat, is faithfully recorded by the artist to echo the grid of the fence; the grids in which we ourselves function, the fences we erect, and those that limit our freedoms.

A further public display of the private is found in *Shady Ladies*. Kotze says, 'In Jo'burg the mannequins are black. That's a change from previous times when all these things were sold for the white wealthy. Now they're for the black wealthy.' The interest is in the introspection of the faces – the fluid treatment of the paint, and the expressions, makes them faces not of models but of real people. The expressions are serious, individualistic, mysterious, suggestive of suffering, of intellectual and interior life. They subvert both racist stereotypes, and the still current sexist idea that equates



puritanical background of dark, rigid columns and a gloomily painted wall. (This painting, perhaps the best in the whole show, was the only one that remained unsold.)

Kotze's titles, which he chooses in order give a light tone to a show, are clues to the thinking that directed his attention to the selected scenes. The titles are often in juxtaposition to the serious intent of the painting. Here we are mocked by the title as our modesty is at first

a pretty woman with a brainless plaything. We expect shop-window dummies to have mask-like faces, and he has given them personalities.

*Pisces Rising* works with perceptions of exterior and interior space and reality. It is a city scene, a still life with moving elements. It might be seen as an interior self-portrait, for Kotze's astrological sign is Pisces, he said. The aquarium-as-window initially attracted him.

*Shady Ladies*  
(Johannesburg),  
2001  
60 x 80cm  
oil on canvas





The vivid fish in the picture break up a virtual surface, but in that surface is reflected what would be behind the viewer: ghostly cars, buildings and sinister alleyways, which seem transported to the interior of a café behind the fish. The eye seems to move from the fish to the interior, while the reflections move us further into varying depths, and backwards through the body and behind ourselves. Simultaneously the fish break up the plane of the wall on which the picture hangs, so the picture becomes an event with a present action. The management of real and virtual space moves the viewer from a past experience to a continuous interruption. A juxtaposition of then and now, space and time.

*'It's like a still life, but a still life is usually contrived, the subject is arranged by the artist. I arrange the four edges only. What you see in this picture is really there. It's like painting nature. It forces you into something unique and strong. If you try to do something out of your mind you tend to repeat yourself, or things you've seen before, because culture impinges on us all the time. So to reduce the effect of that, artists paint nature or naked bodies. But from your head you get things that vibrate from the past rather than the now. When you arrange things for a still life you're imitating something done before. Not being the arranger of what I see in front of me allows the odd juxtapositions to emerge.'*

*'You don't normally see these things like this because they happen in a moment of passing, when you don't have the control. I have taken control of the*

*composition to a certain extent, by defining the edges, but I leave the internal composition to what is there. Thus it's not as contrived as still lifes usually tend to be. Central to it, are emphasis, mood, and colour. But you get the hints from reality that spark a painting, inform a painting, as it were.'*

The effect is repeated in *Shubidua*. Using a limited palette ('like Breughel', people said) Kotze presents a display of shoes in what appears to be a quiet dance, with a café scene mirrored above it in complex reflections. A woman stands and a man lost in thought is shown from many angles. He is like our doppelgänger hovering above the shoe-field. One seems to see oneself seeing inside the picture, and looking back at oneself looking.


Two other paintings offer particular gestures to Kotze's long romance with architecture: *Skyline*, and *Skyscraper*. Both regard the tops of buildings, at their intersection with the sky. The sewing-machine mechanic's shop-roof is decorated with the skeletons of old sewing machines. Along the sky's edge they become a procession of elegant, animal-like forms, the repetition creating an apt decorative design. Below them, the shadows made by years of rain on the old painted walls create the gentle softness of decline. Einos Nangako, the Namibian artist, with whom I first viewed the picture, immediately commented on the telephone lines. They are a device to stabilise the composition, heading up and out, but they have a further significance, linking this modest neighbourhood with the rest of the world, and with the future.

**Skyline (Maputo), 2001**  
60 x 80cm  
oil on canvas

*Skyscraper* depicts the apex of an impressive new building in Harare, the hard elegance of its surprising geometry accentuated by the contrasting softness of the clouds. Solidity impinges on unlimited space. The boldness of the image is emphasised by the unusual perspective, and it most clearly asserts Kotze's theme of vision as agency, and energy.

It is also an example of his long absorption in making studies of architecture from warped and distorted perspectives to enhance the drama he sees in it. The detailed interest in large structures such as this skyscraper, and his stress on modelling, on light and shade, suggest a determination to correctly reproduce images of three-dimensional form. However, closer acquaintance with his work reveals that he intends always to create fascination in the design of the picture's surface, especially by the use of contrasts. It is the shapes and colours that he stresses, how they perform to

create visual excitement. For all his interest in structures, in different perspectives, this is not 'sculptural' painting – it does not seek to represent the three-dimensional for its own sake. The form is refashioned so that its primary purpose is to be pictorially beautiful in a fascinating way.

Proust said that 'a picture's beauty does not depend on the things portrayed in it', but it is not divorced from them either. Kotze has, in his choice and treatment of representational objects achieved an impressive success. He balances intellectual content with the physicality of his painterly style. This style has enough strength to bear the weight of his thoughts, and in a sense to override them, so that it is the picture, not the message, that has primary importance. It is this commitment to the picture as a picture that gives John Kotze's art its authentic voice. 

*Skyscraper* (Kopje Plaza, Harare), 2001  
90 x 80cm  
oil on canvas

All photographs by the artist





# The AIDS Wall in Harare

## Making a *Difference*?

by Joyce Kohl

When I received a Fulbright Grant to work in Zimbabwe last year, part of my proposal was for a community art project. Before leaving Los Angeles, we learned that although in Zimbabwe the death toll from AIDS is astronomical, denial is very common. I considered the effect the Aids Quilt had in the United States. Once I arrived, I decided to do a public art project to help 'break the silence' that has surrounded AIDS. I wanted to give the community a focus for dealing with loss and to educate for prevention of further spread. A friend suggested that I consult with a ceramics factory in Ruwa, outside of Harare. Although this seemed like a long shot, I asked for a tour of the factory. Afterwards, I hesitantly asked if they might be interested in working on such a project, with their factory artists initially drawing how they saw AIDS affecting their communities. Expecting a few rough sketches at best, I was stunned a week later when I saw the tiles that all 19 of the factory artists had voluntarily done in response to my query. I was amazed by the clarity of the artists' images, and how specifically they addressed the problems of dealing with AIDS in urban and rural Zimbabwe.

Ros Byrne, the owner of the factory, and I selected five artists to enlarge their images, some focusing on rural and others on urban scenes. The artists worked with the Weya format for visually

is portrays a funeral ceremony on HIV/AIDS affected family. The other died of AIDS in 1997 and widows remarried her husband without being tested, passing on the infection to him. The epidemic impoverished this family that children are no longer going to school and their health deteriorating to hunger. The Church pays last respect by giving spiritual support.

trated  
okuda k  
Baba va  
ndokugai  
rasina kut  
nana hwa  
tapurirwa  
vinda nz  
kaderere  
fi dzichu  
asara.

**AIDS WALL: HEALING THE COMMUNITY**  
DZIRO RĚSHURAMATONGO(AIDS): KURAPA NHARAUNDA MUGORE RA 2000  
UMDULI WE AIDS: USILISA UZULU  
ARTISTS OF ROS BYRNE POTTERY, RUWA including:  
Thomas Chikhero  
Kudakwashe Chuma  
Manuel Chuma  
Israel Muswe  
Moenda Nendoro  
Funded by:  
ZIMBABWE - U.S. CDC AIDS  
Project. With Special thanks  
to Ambassador Tim McDonald, Ros  
Byrne, Thelma Newmarch & SHAPE -  
Zimbabwe.  
COORDINATED BY:  
Joyce Kohl, Fulbright Scholar  
TILES DONATED by Earthen Fire  
TRANSLATIONS  
AVAILABLE IN GALLERY



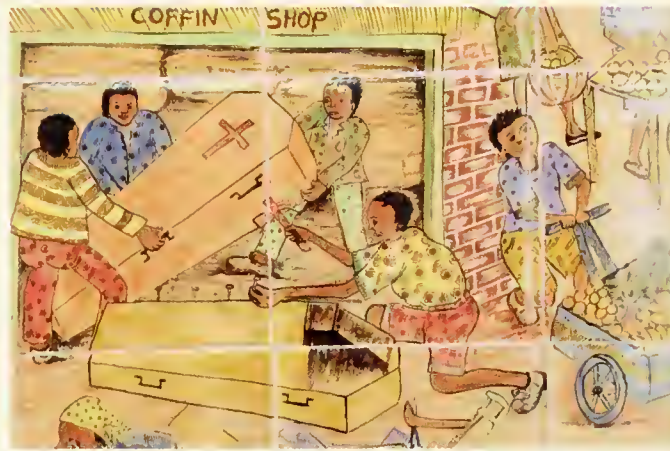


You took my mother and father. I miss them.' We tiled the bench with the children's work.

I approached Mike St. Louis, head of CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Zimbabwe, about funding, and they awarded a grant to the project. We hired Mike Mavumbe, whom Pip Curling knew, and his partners from Mozambique to construct the wall. The rainy season, the Christmas holidays, and other interruptions (including a gasoline shortage with lines for gas up to six hours' long) conspired to make the wall very difficult to complete.

For the opening reception, we hired a marimba and mbira band of street kids from Streets Ahead. We invited U.S. Ambassador Tom McDonald, Zimbabwean statesmen, the factory artists, the National Gallery's mailing list and the children who had worked on the bench. We ended up with a huge and appreciative crowd of people, the likes of which had probably rarely rubbed shoulders with each other before.

telling a story through sequential pictures, with a short verbal narration. We translated all of the texts into English, Shona and Ndebele. The larger panels addressed the ramification of more complicated issues, such as the Shona custom of a widow marrying her husband's brother. The factory artists, many who were self-taught, were enthralled with the project and the opportunity to have an impact on their community. On one panel we checkerboarded the smaller tiles, so that each of the factory's nineteen artists was represented on the wall.



accessible for people not going to and from the Gallery.

My husband, Bill Morse, and I designed the wall to be free standing in a 'Z' configuration, and Ros and I worked on the overall configuration, laying out the elements on a bench for reflection. Pip Curling, the curator of the National Gallery, worked with me to find a site in the Sculpture Garden that would be near the path leading into the park, and thus be easily

I was volunteering as an art teacher at an orphanage in Harare. I asked the children, many of whom had been orphaned by AIDS, and some of whom were street kids, to depict how AIDS has affected their lives and their communities. A few of the children drew pictures; others wrote poetry, in either English or Shona. One very personal testimony came from a boy who wrote: 'AIDS,



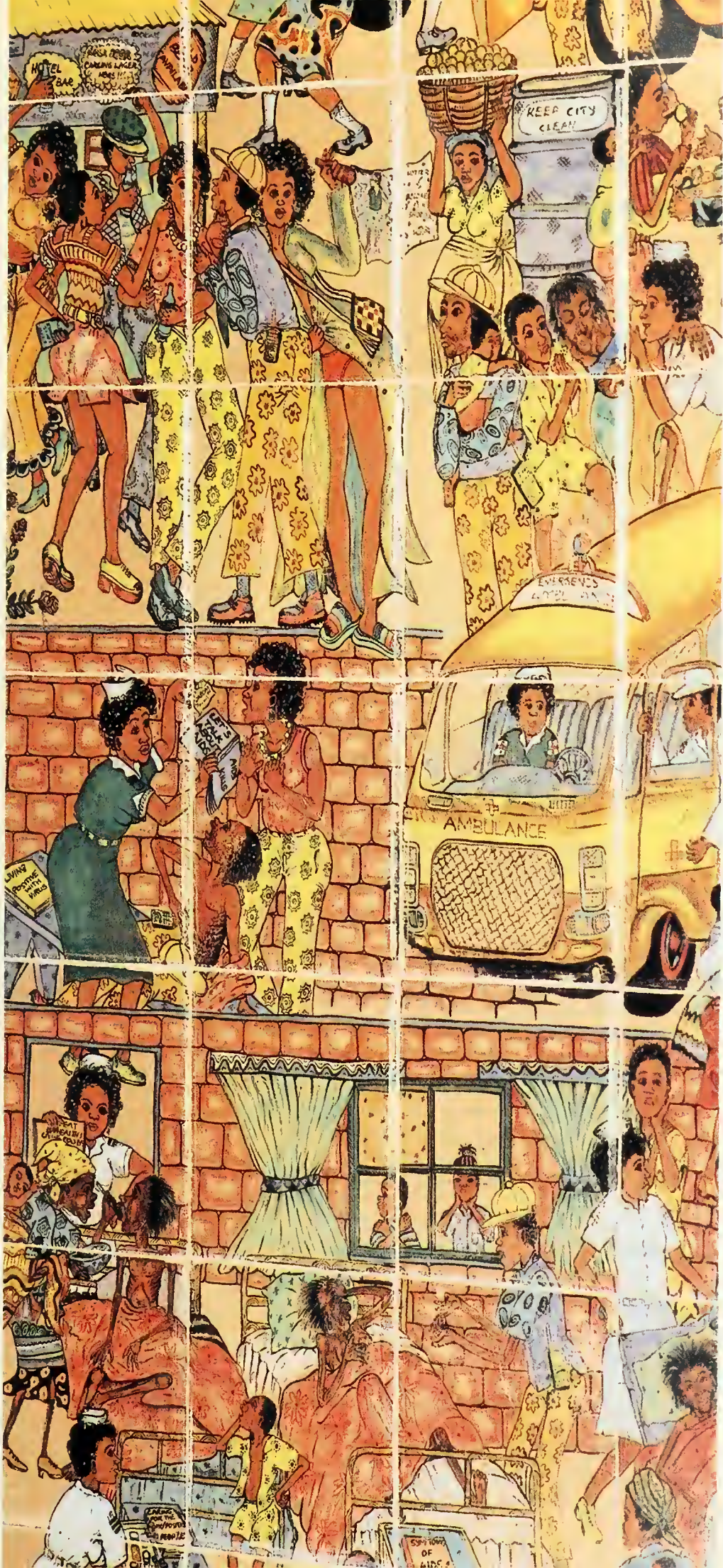


Especially gratifying for me was watching people's exploration of the images on the wall. Workmen in tall rubber boots, businessmen in suits, tourists and families with children all stopped to look and discuss the issues that the factory workers had so graphically described.

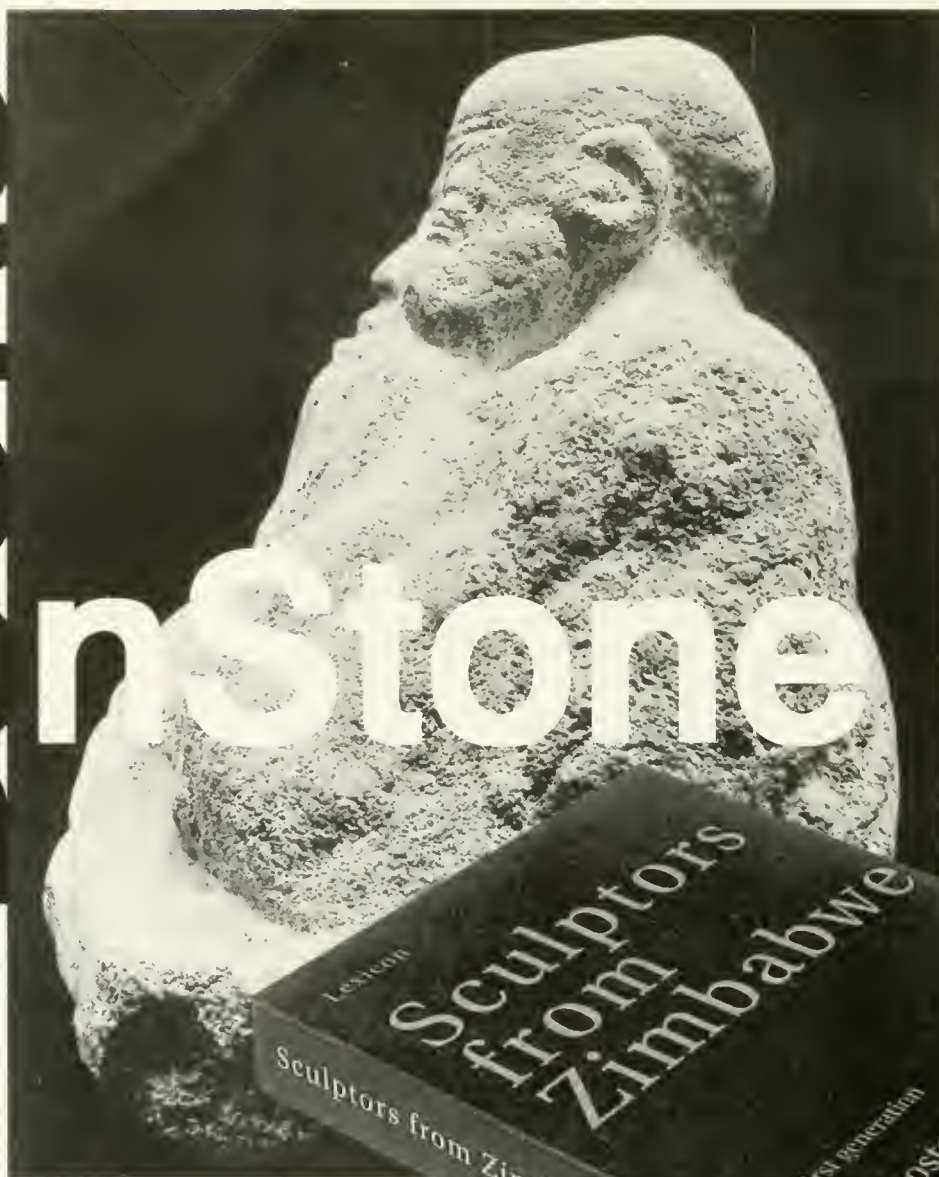
On returning home and reflecting on the experience, the truth had been hammered home to me: these are real people who are needlessly dying. News has come back to us of more friends and acquaintances who have succumbed to the disease. Especially poignant was the death of Mike Mavumbe, the warm and intuitive man who was the contractor for the project. When the Bakersfield Museum approached me about doing an exhibition about the making of the wall, I realised that just as the strength of the images are instructive in Zimbabwe, so can they educate here, where we need to find the resources to help with this crisis. I approached Ros Byrne about having her artists make a couple of panels for this exhibition. She and Helen Lieros of Gallery Delta worked with the artists. While originally planning on including four panels, seven were all so strong and unique we expanded our project. When I asked Helen for her input on which four to select, she wrote back, *'Take them all. You won't regret it. Art must continue to develop beyond the formula. AIDS is killing our young people, and development is essential.'*

The wall received some criticism in a Zimbabwean arts newsletter with comments that it portrays too little hope. Pip Curling's response was very clear:

*'The wall is there – it is durable – it is permanent – it is visible – and every day people stop and they look. Sometimes the visitors come to the Gallery to tell us how much they were moved by the experience. The message is harsh, the realisation is unaffected. If only one person who stopped at the wall refrained from a dangerous sexual liaison, that is enough – the AIDS wall achieved its purpose – a work of art that made a difference in somebody's life. How many works of art can claim to have done that?'*







Roy Creeth

## Murray McCartney reviews two recent books on Zimbabwean sculpture, and recalls some of their predecessors

It is now over twenty years since the appearance of the first book devoted to Zimbabwean stone sculpture. Marion Arnold's *Zimbabwean Stone Sculpture*<sup>1</sup> was the product of academic research undertaken during the dying days of Rhodesia, and was published one year after independence. It was by definition a pioneering work, with few bibliographic lodestars and little in the way of parallel developments to draw on.

Arnold's tone was predictably academic, and although she sounded a note of wistful regret about this in a Postscript to the book's second edition in 1986, it requires no apology. Within the parameters she set herself, her commentary is engaging, comprehensive and plainly set down. The choice of Michael Gelfand to write the Foreword offers an early clue to the ethnographic orientation of what follows. Arnold was alert to the frequent

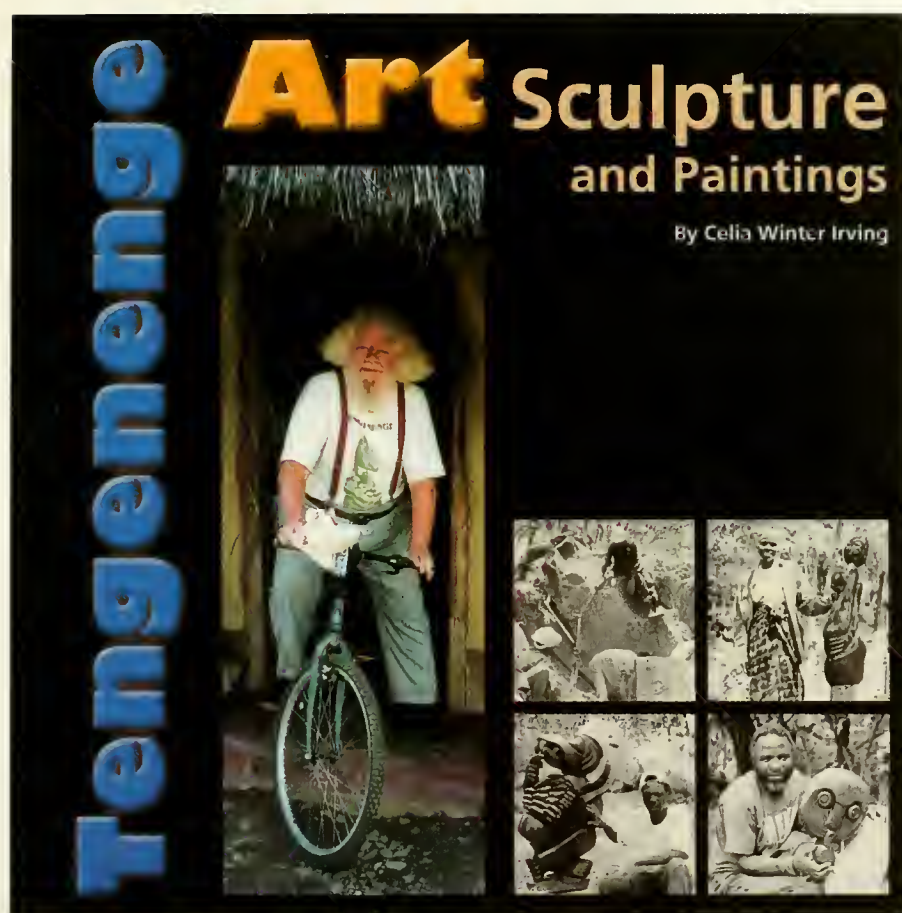
misapplication of the term 'Shona sculpture' to work done by artists who were no such thing, but her own field of enquiry was precisely defined: 'with regard to sculpture produced in Zimbabwe, I have discussed only the work of Shona artists.'

Her excursion into the archaeological controversy over Great Zimbabwe would probably be less detailed if she were writing today. However, it does provide the validation for an illuminating discussion of the soapstone Zimbabwe birds, a discussion which set the stage for two particular dramas: the history and provenance of contemporary sculpture, and the shuffling dance of culture and politics.

The birds themselves were to be the focus of a much later volume<sup>2</sup>, in which Edward Matenga traced their removal from the site of

Joseph Ndandarika  
*Old Wizard of 110 years, 1963,*  
 58 x 30 x 45cm (sculpture on the  
 back cover of Ben Joosten's book)





Great Zimbabwe, their symbolic significance and their partial return to the country. He is candid about the original theft of the carvings, ambitious in his claims for their impact ('... the birds continue to inspire all sections of Zimbabwean society today') and generous in his appraisal of twentieth-century research:

*In the political circumstances of Rhodesia it was difficult to practise honest scholarship on African history. Archaeologists, such as Peter Garlake, who fought publicly for an important point of principle, stand out as exceptions, and their unwavering dedication to rigorous archaeological science was only vindicated after independence.*

Matenga went on to offer a lament that continues to echo through the pages of recent writing about the country's heritage and cultural production:

*The African majority were not given access to the debate on Great Zimbabwe at all, let alone to the practise of archaeology, which the establishment considered to be a science and therefore beyond the comprehension of Africans.*

We may set aside the fact that archaeology is a science, however 'the establishment' of the day might have manipulated it; and we may wonder if the 'majority' would have brought more light than heat to the debate. It is harder, however, to ignore the sentiment that lies, lightly buried, beneath Matenga's lines.

Marion Arnold's study was amongst the first in what has become a long list of books on stone sculpture. In the latest to come off the press, *Tengenenge Art: Sculpture and Painting*<sup>3</sup>, Celia Winter Irving suggests that, 'Culture is a trophy much in demand by the new scramblers for Africa.' It is a reasonable claim, but it is also a bold one, carrying as it does the risk of the author being hoist with her own petard.

An early entrant into the canon was Fernando Mor, who served as the Italian Ambassador to Zimbabwe during the 1980s. His *Shona Sculpture*<sup>4</sup> is an extended essay born out of his enthusiasm for the art. The book was self-published, at a time when no commercial publisher in Zimbabwe would have risked the heavy investment in a volume containing a hundred full-colour plates, and it is infused with a rich and confident European aesthetic sensibility. Mor takes Arnold to task for attributing 'excessive importance to the identification and significance of the content' of the sculpture, and calls for greater attention to be paid to artistic value. His words are worth quoting at length, if only because they address a theme too often neglected by subsequent commentators:

*Let us forget about the ancestors as such, with the store of affection and reverence which is due to them. Ordinary or emotional sentiment must not be confused with lyrical or creative sentiment, which is a quite different thing. The criticism to be directed at*

*certain Shona sculpture, especially the earlier and at any rate lesser works, is in fact its too explicit fidelity to content and its paucity of fiction, the supreme foundation of art. (The word 'fiction' derives from the Latin 'fingere', which meant to create, to invent, to imagine, to mould; and also to simulate.) The artist who feels too much, quivers rather than creates, and this occurs in Shona sculpture when the ethnic content is overwhelming.*

In his attention to this 'dualism between the atavistic pull and new experiences', Mor stands almost alone in offering a seriously critical voice. Many – indeed, most – writers have been content to recognise (if not define) the distinction between 'airport art' and 'the real thing'; few have had the capacity or courage to sort the wheat from the chaff in the second category.

The first formal challenge to Mor's thesis came from Winter Irving herself in 1991. *Stone Sculpture in Zimbabwe*<sup>5</sup> is both more compendious and more general than its predecessors, and reflects the currents and enthusiasms of its day. It ploughs the familiar furrows of the sculpture's cultural origins, but it also reviews the history of painting in the country, and includes chapters on government policy and private patronage. The book is scattered with optimistic references to the stillborn regional school of art, and the short-lived artists' organisation, ZAVACAD (the Zimbabwe Association of Visual Artists, Craftspersons and Designers), neither of which fulfilled the many hopes pinned on them by the author. The book suffers a little from trying to be all things to all men. It praises the government's 'enlightened' cultural policy of allowing 'freedom of expression' to artists, and not having 'nationalise[d] the art of Zimbabwe', and yet proceeds to quote the then Director of the National Arts Council defining the philosophy and ideology of the Council as 'to encourage the essential Africaness [sic] of art in Zimbabwe'. The private sector, too, is treated with kid gloves, little mention being made of its occasional tendency to leak across the line from commerce to rapacity.

In terms of aesthetic evaluation, Winter Irving begins unambiguously enough:

*Stone sculpture in Zimbabwe cannot be explained through the formal analysis that is applied to western sculpture. Each object cannot be viewed as an art object alone with purely aesthetic values and properties. To be fully understood the sculpture must be placed in a cultural context.*

*[National Gallery Director] Professor Rogers feels that it is impossible to establish absolute standards of excellence in art... The permanent sculpture collection is not a partial historical record of excellence, but a partial historical record of carving in stone.*



*There are no established conditions of judgement for the Annual Exhibition at the National Gallery, rather the work is allowed to speak for itself and quality determines the judges' decisions.*

One can imagine Fernando Mor responding with a wry smile to the circularity of the logic. Later, Winter Irving foresees the possibility that 'the Regional School for Art will encourage critical analysis to develop', and will imbue the artists with 'notions of good art', but she offers little in the way of definition.

Part, at least, of the problem is the shadow of the market that looms over so much discussion of the art. Writing about Gallery Delta, Winter Irving notes that, 'Here art ceases to be an industry and at times is not income-producing ... commerce does not seem to enter into the arrangements between the owners and artists. Nonetheless, Gallery Delta admirably serves the needs of Zimbabwe's painters.' Why 'Nonetheless'?

A less even-handed and more radical note was struck by Olivier Sultan, in *Life in Stone*<sup>6</sup>, a richly illustrated book featuring the work of 'the fifteen most influential artists'. For the most part, Sultan's brief text covered already familiar ground, but it held seeds of missionary zeal:

*We hope that ... we can help to restore the movement's credibility. We say this because unfortunately 'Shona' sculpture is increasingly being sold and promoted throughout the world – even within the larger and better galleries – by charlatans who are re-writing history and creating their own myths.*

He made the mistake of naming one of the 'charlatans' in a footnote, and his publishers suffered a years' long lawsuit in consequence; the second edition of the book omitted the name, but lamented still that,

*Romantic if not fictitious colour is sometimes loosely used to suggest an Africa that is mystic, tribal, primitive and the locus for the sculptors and the sculpture ... [this] does a great disservice to Zimbabwe's finest sculptors by surrounding their art with a spurious mystique.*

Who are the finest? In general, the critical judgements have been left to history, and they find expression in the selection choices made – whether in Zimbabwe or outside – for major collections and exhibitions. The near-unanimity of these judgements is reflected by that of Bernd Kleine-Gunk in his *Shona Sculpture: Ten Stone-carvers from Zimbabwe*<sup>7</sup>, which overlaps closely with those of both Mor and Sultan: Tapfuma Gutsa, Joram Mariga, Bernard Matemera, Thomas Mukarobgwa, Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Henry Munyaradzi, Joseph



Sylvia Brock



Chris Mills



Ndandarika, Brighton Sango, and John, Bernard and Lazarus Takawira.

All of these artists have featured prominently in international exhibitions, and their work is well represented in the accompanying catalogues. Harare's Chapungu Sculpture Park has played a leading role in this regard, and its publications are models of elegant design, many of them illustrated with excellent full-colour photographs of selected works.<sup>8</sup>

Ben Joosten's newly published *Sculptors from Zimbabwe: the first generation*<sup>9</sup> cannot boast the luxury of full colour but it is in other respects a most handsome production indeed, bound in hard covers and with fine black and white photographs on each of its four hundred pages.

The starting point for Joosten's study was an archive of photographs, inherited by Amsterdam's Royal Tropical Institute, of over one thousand sculptures which had been brought to The Netherlands in 1980 following an exhibition in Pretoria seven years earlier. The work spanned the years 1966-73, and the archive illustrated the productive infancy of the Tengenenge community founded by Tom Blomefield. It was a resource without parallel, and in the early 1990s Joosten made the first of several visits to Zimbabwe in order to amplify the records.

Inspired at first by the activities of Tengenenge alone, he was later encouraged to broaden his study to include the work of sculptors from elsewhere in Zimbabwe, and extended his research and fieldwork accordingly.

The structure of the book bears similarities to several which came before it – introductory and uncontentious chapters on the history and genesis of the sculpture, followed by biographical sketches of the artists – but it is the differences that give it its distinction. The first of these is the sheer volume of Joosten's material: nearly three hundred artists are profiled, most of whom have never before found their way into print. Some of the entries are as brief as a few lines, based on information culled from interviews, press clippings or private correspondence, but in promoting them from the ephemeral realm to the permanent record, Joosten has done yeoman service to the historiography of Zimbabwean art.

The second distinction resides in his brief appendix of 'Documents'. The contents of this – reproductions of long-forgotten



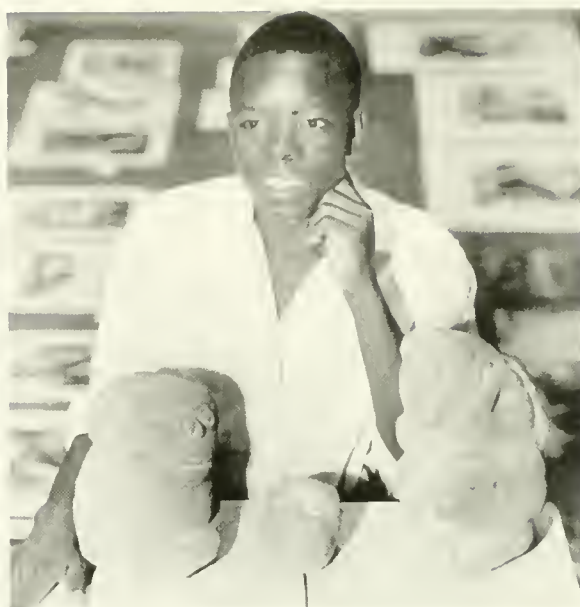
top left: Bernard Matemera, Tengenenge, 1967 (in Joosten, p. 247)

left: Frank Vanji and Joram Mariga, Nyanga 1963 (in Joosten, p. 118)

right: Lemon Moses, Tengenenge, 1967 (in Joosten, p. 262)



1



2



4



3

- 1 Nicholas Mukomberanwa, 1964 (in Joosten, p. 54)  
 2 Joseph Ndandarika, 1963 (in Joosten, p. 60)  
 3 Paul Gwichiri, 1973 (in Joosten, p. 76)  
 4 John Takawira, 1970 (in Joosten, p. 138)

Portrait photographs by National Gallery, Harare



pictures, facsimiles of old press clippings and letters – may owe more to serendipity than to relentless scholarship, but they are no less engaging for that. Again, he has performed an historical rescue operation. There are those who may bridle at – even be offended by – the publication of personal letters, but they catch the social and emotional temperature of their days, and to that extent they enliven our knowledge of the past.

More than that, they offer evidence of a dignity which is too often misinterpreted as colonial subservience. Joosten's contacts have delivered a handful of manuscript letters from Joram Mariga, one of the earliest stone sculptors, to Mrs Pat Pearce, a long-time supporter of the artists. When, in 1971, she announced that she was travelling to England, Mariga replied,

*This was the most sad news to myself in life although I am unable to do anything to stop you to go or to die. News of your going away shall remain a very big and untreated wound in my heart. ... How shall I be present or see the place where you shall be buried as I did with Mr Pearce when he died? This seems so small but to myself is very great. For poor Joram to only come to Nyanga from here [Troutbeck] it is a problem, how shall I manage to come to England?*

Less poetic, but no less heartfelt, was a brief typewritten note from Tom Blomefield to the Chairman of the National Gallery, Sir Athol Evans. Blomefield had seen the catalogue of a 1971 exhibition, Vukutu Art (named for the company owned by the wife of National Gallery Director Frank McEwen), at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris; he claimed that most of the work came in fact from artists of his own Tengenenge community:

*In other words McEwen is taking the glory for my work and not acknowledging my artists. ... I would like an answer by sundown otherwise it will be blown up in the press.*

Would that art could attract such passions today! History doesn't record how far Blomefield was mollified by it, but Sir Athol was given the hospitality of *The Sunday Mail* the following week for half a page of amelioration, hand-wringing concern and evasion ('any statement ... may be prejudicial to a possible action against or by the Gallery').

It is a pity that such personal and professional dramas are relegated to an appendix, rather than having been woven into the body of the narrative. In this respect, Ben Joosten would be the first to concede his lack of writing and publishing experience. The book is a mine of information, and is beautifully produced; for this, Joosten's research and his designers' skills deserve full credit. For its structural unevenness,

however, and the absence of language editing and proof reading, we can only regret that the publishers did not take more time and care. In his Foreword to the book, George Kahari claims that it represents 'a significant contribution to world literature'; a good editor might have suggested that he moderate the hyperbole lest he offer too many hostages to fortune.

Hyperbole and editorial untidiness are common enough accompaniments to books that emerge in the wake of their authors' enthusiasm, and beyond the boundaries of the conventional publishing house.

Celia Winter Irving has the English language advantage over Ben Joosten, and her *Tengenenge Art: Sculpture and Paintings* also enjoyed the attention of a professional editor. Again, the book is well designed and produced, and it has a particularly attractive cover. Infelicities remain, though, and they mar what is otherwise, at times, an engaging and affectionate essay on the life and work of Tom Blomefield and his artistic colleagues: proofing errors abound, bibliographic data are absent from references, and the prose has a tendency to sometimes run too free.

Winter Irving is an almost compulsively lyrical writer. When she eschews the niceties of grammatical correctness, she does so with a measure of purpose; when she casts around for a metaphor, there is always one to hand; and if the tone of her rhetoric is often conversational, it reflects no more than her keenness to talk.

The pitfalls of such a style are several, and Winter Irving is not always nimble enough to avoid them, nor her editor perhaps tough enough to crack the whip. Neat similes lose their currency when too much is asked of them. When words seem to trip off the tongue with slippery ease, the warning bells of excess should sound:

*African culture has its spinoffs, and therefore its share of mercenaries and illicit traffickers, its buccaneers, bootleggers and profiteers. Culture has its vultures, its whores and its pimps; it hands out its freebies and makes way for its groupies.*

The promise of the book's subtitle – that it will treat painting as well as sculpture – is only partially kept. Winter Irving allows that 'painting at Tengenenge is a comparatively recent and isolated phenomenon', and she also suggests that it has struggled to emerge from the shadow cast by the stone:

*The power and erudition of the sculpture from Tengenenge within the context of the African way of understanding things, has assisted the dismissal of the paintings as an aspect of African whimsy, making faerie law out of folklore...*

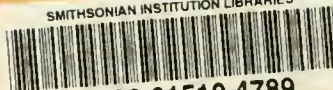
Whatever the 'law' of the faeries may have been, their appearance in literature has surely transcended mere whimsy. Edmund Spenser introduced his classic poem, *The Faerie Queen*, by announcing that, 'Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralize my song.' No less seriously, W. B. Yeats characterised 'The Land of the Faery' as 'one where nobody gets old and godly and grave.'

Such questions of linguistic precision would matter less if the guardians and chroniclers of Zimbabwe's art were not so quick to scorn the 'new scramblers for Africa'. If the pimps and profiteers insist on pigeon-holing Zimbabwean painting with the aboriginal *naïf*, and on festooning its stone sculpture with colourful tales of tribal myth, they are likely to take heart from such assertions as, 'The origin of Tengenenge is shrouded in many beginnings, and the mist is not yet cleared from the mountains.'

The origins are important, of course, and we must hope that the chroniclers are standing ready for the final clearance of the mist. Equally important, though, is a rather more cool analysis of why some artists soar above their fellows, and why this or that piece of work has an eloquence which others lack. With their transparently enthusiastic commitment, Ben Joosten and Celia Winter Irving have not only offered us much to reflect upon; they have also left the doors ajar to invite their own – and others' – further exploration. ✎

- 1 Arnold, Marion, *Zimbabwean Stone Sculpture*, Bulawayo: Louis Bolze Publishing, 1981
- 2 Matenga, Edward, *The Soapstone Birds of Great Zimbabwe: Symbols of a Nation*, Harare: African Publishing Group, 1998
- 3 Winter Irving, Celia, *Tengenenge Art: Sculpture and Paintings*, Eerbeeck, The Netherlands: World Art Foundation, 2001
- 4 Mor, Fernando, *Shona Sculpture*, (self-published), Harare, 1987
- 5 Winter-Irving, Celia, *Stone Sculpture in Zimbabwe: Context, Content and Form*, Harare: Roblaw Publishers, 1991
- 6 Sultan, Olivier, *Life in Stone: Zimbabwean sculpture*, Harare: Baobab Books, 1992
- 7 Kleine-Gunk, Bernd, *Shona Sculpture: Ten Stone-carvers from Zimbabwe*, Wuppertal: Graphium Press, 1995
- 8 Examples include: *Zimbabwe Stone Sculpture: The Second Generation* (UK touring exhibition, 1994); *Moderne Afrikanische Kunst: Die Steinbilder aus Zimbabwe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994); *Zimbabwe Stone Sculpture* (Cape Town, 1997); *Contemporary Stone Carving from Zimbabwe* (Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1990). See also, Bourgois, Geert [ed.], *Legacies of Stone: Zimbabwe Past and Present*, 2 volume catalogue, Belgium: Royal Museum for Central Africa, 1997
- 9 Joosten, Ben, *Sculptors from Zimbabwe: the first generation*, Dodewaard, The Netherlands: Galerie de Stang, 2001





Musha unochungwa Rutivwa  
Shabhini vaboferi wana AIDS  
Baba yeburika vanavigwa paipo  
navaadzi vavo vaviri kuvabadi  
vana Vhabazi vaviri vaswa vavire  
Vana vanonitira vabereki vavo  
vavira vana ne AIDS. Vavire  
vane AIDS vanogona kuvavirwa

Umuzi ugqirwe wabayishabini  
ngoba abazali baphele nge AIDS  
Ubaba wesithembu uyavutshwa  
eceleni kwabafazi bakhe abazali  
Rwivare Abafazi ababali abasulayo  
Dayagula Abafazi vana bagawula  
abazali ababazi bafazi ze AIDS  
zihanyiswa ukuvavirwa